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LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL



LONDON'S OPEN-AIR SCHOOLS

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P. S. KING AND SON, LIMITED,

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1929.

No. 2684. Price 6d.

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FOREWORD

THE Elementary Education Acts from 1870 onwards brought instruction within the reach of all children of school age, and made school attendance compulsory. It soon, however, became apparent that some children could not run in the unequal race. Physical and mental disabilities made the handicap too heavy. Special schools came into being. These were for children who were under disabilities of a more or less permanent nature—blindness, deafness, mental or physical incapacity.

With the introduction of a more thorough system of medical inspection in the schools it became evident that there was also a class of children—the temporarily unfit—who, if their health could be restored, might compete with their stronger brothers and sisters. These were children who, although having no definite diseases, were delicate or anæmic, and unable to profit as they should from education in the ordinary schools. The recognition of fresh air and sunlight as important health factors prepared the way for open-air schools.

The open-air movement in London came of age in July, 1928, for the first school of the kind in London—in England, it may be said—was opened on 22nd July, 1907. Since that year the movement has steadily grown. It has passed the experimental stage and can now be regarded as an established feature of our educational system.

In recent years much interest has been taken in open-air education, and, since the Great War, the scientific study of the value of sunlight as a healing agent has still further directed attention to its advantages and possibilities.

In many parts of the country education authorities are establishing open-air schools for delicate children or building their elementary schools on open-air principles. The following description of the open-air movement in London may, therefore, be of particular interest at the moment. This pamphlet, which has been written by Mr. E. de la Mare Norris, of the Special Services Branch of my department, traces the growth of the movement and suggests that it has had a wider influence than in its own sphere.

THE COUNTY HALL,
LONDON, S.E.1.

J. H. Tate.
Education Officer.

LONDON'S OPEN-AIR SCHOOLS

EARLY DAYS

It would probably be safe to say that in all times there have been those who have recognised the advantages of education in natural surroundings rather than in the class-room. Nearly three centuries ago Comenius, writer of the *Great Didactic*, emphasised the importance of turning to Nature as the fountain-head of learning.

"As far as possible," he says, "men are to be taught to become wise, not by books, but by the heavens, the earth, oaks and beeches; that is they must learn to know and examine the things themselves and not the testimony and observations of others about the things."

In more modern times Pestalozzi, who realised that a constant association with beautiful natural sights must have an influence on mental culture, made a similar appeal:

"Lead your child out into Nature," he advises. "Tutor him on the hilltop and in the valleys. There he will listen better, and the sense of freedom will give him more strength to overcome difficulties. But in these hours of freedom let him be taught by Nature rather than by you. Should a bird sing or insect hum on the leaf, at once stop talking. Birds and insects are teaching him—you may be silent."

These men and others advocated open-air methods for their educational advantages. Open-air schools, however, owe their inception to health considerations. It is claimed that the school at Charlottenburg, which was opened in August, 1904, has the honour of being the first institution of the kind in Europe. Medical inspection in the German schools had revealed that there was a certain class of children who were able to attend school, but who were unable to benefit properly by the instruction, as they were suffering from anæmia and many other diseases in an incipient stage. Amongst such children were many so-called "backward." They were not backward because of defective intelligence, but rather because of impaired vitality, due to defective frame, improper feeding and unfavourable surroundings. If they were compelled to remain within the four walls of the ordinary class-room their condition might be aggravated. On the other hand, if they were kept away from school their education would undoubtedly suffer. The outcome of these considerations was the open-air school.

In a pine forest at Charlottenburg, on the outskirts of Berlin, a number of delicate boys and girls were collected and given health treatment and school instruction in the open air. The only buildings

were of a slight, inexpensive character but sufficient to protect the children during wet weather. Warmly clad and well shod, they took their lessons in the open, even when snow was on the ground. Wholesome food and a period for sleep were features of the system. The children were selected for admission under medical advice and were medically supervised during their stay in the school; in fact, doctors and teachers worked in close and sympathetic co-operation. Judged both by health and educational results, the school was a great success. The success of the experiment led speedily to developments, and in 1907 England followed Germany's example.

London's first experiment was made at Bostall Wood, Woolwich, in the recreation ground of the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society, which had been lent for the purpose. The school opened in July and remained open for 13 weeks. It was conducted on principles more or less similar to those of the German schools. Notwithstanding a wet summer and difficulties inseparable from a new venture, the results, particularly in the matter of health, were most encouraging. It is interesting to record that, when the school closed in the autumn, a letter was received from a large number of parents expressing their approval of the experiment. "We are convinced," they wrote, "that the children have derived great benefit, both physically and mentally, from their attendance at the school" "We hope sincerely that the success of the present year may be a stimulus toward a great extension of the movement and the establishment of many similar schools next year."

GROWTH OF THE MOVEMENT

Bostall Wood was not re-opened in 1908, but three new schools were established in that year—one in the woods on Shooter's Hill, a second in the grounds of Birley House, Forest Hill, and a third in Kentish Town at Montpelier House. Montpelier House had, unfortunately, to be given up in the following year, but the other schools were able to do work of much value for many years. Birley House continued to be used until Easter, 1927, when, the grounds being required for incorporation in the Horniman Gardens, the school was moved to a new site at Brent Knoll about a mile away.

Shooter's Hill School is still in existence, but the site, like that of its fellow pioneer school, is required for inclusion in a public Park, and the school will be transferred to the Charlton Park estate during the present year. Shooter's Hill is in some respects a most suitable site for an open-air school. Its altitude is high, space ample (over six acres) comprising meadow and woodland, and there are extensive views of the country round, of dockland and the River Thames. The movements of the shipping are a continual interest, and material ready to hand for a practical lesson in geography. The main drawbacks of the site are difficulty of access and lack of an adequate water supply. On the question of sites it may be of interest to quote the

views of Sir George Newman, the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education :—

“ The ideal site for an open-air school is on the outskirts of the town, preferably on that side from which the prevailing wind blows. It should be within easy walking distance, and in any event not exceeding a quarter of a mile from a tram route or of roads capable of taking motor omnibuses, and not too steep of access. The site should slope preferably to the south with a belt of trees or rising land for protection on the north and east. The soil should be sufficiently light and porous to ensure that water drains away quickly. The advantage of a country



SHOOTER'S HILL, A CLASS IN THE WOODS.

site is, of course, great in view of the purer air, larger space and the facilities for nature study, but sufficiently satisfactory schools have been established in towns, provided that the necessary garden space has been available. The site should be of a size sufficient to admit of a playing field and school garden ; generally speaking two acres must be considered the minimum for a school accommodating 100-120 children. A portion of the playground should be asphalted.”

The war and the subsequent economic situation seriously hampered the extension of the open-air movement for some years, but in London, since 1920, the increase in the number of schools has been steadily maintained.

In June, 1920, a school for 260 children was opened at Stowey House, Clapham Common. The actual area of the site is about 2 acres, but the school has also had the use of several additional acres of land acquired for secondary school purposes. The house provides administrative accommodation: class shelters, dining-shed and rest-shed have been erected in the grounds. A feature of this school is that it is now conducted on lines which enable all the children to receive sunlight treatment.

In May, 1923, at the suggestion of Sir Henry Gauvain, who is the Council's consulting specialist for tuberculous children, an experimental



STOWEY HOUSE—A GIRLS' SUNLIGHT CLASS.

boys' class was started at the school. The results of the first summer's experience were satisfactory and now the whole school is conducted on sunlight principles. The consent of parents has been necessary but almost without exception it has been readily given. Teachers and children are enthusiastic co-operators. Sun-bath garments are provided—for the boys slips or a sort of running shorts, and for the girls a "cami-knicker" type of garment with the back cut away to the waist. The garments are made of orange tinted casement cloth. Sun hats are worn, and it is also found that dark glasses or eye shades are needed on some days for protection from glare. Books made of coloured pastel paper are used for working purposes, as white paper is trying to the eyesight. The children work in different parts of

the garden, a special solarium for the girls having been constructed by the boys in the gardening class.

In January, 1922, the first open-air school in the east end of London was opened at Bow Road. The site which is about $\frac{3}{4}$ acre in area is not an ideal one, but to secure sites in the crowded east end districts is a difficult problem. Until recently the site was held on a tenancy, but the Council has now been able to secure the freehold. The school buildings are largely of a temporary character, disused Army huts having been adapted for class-rooms, dining-shed, etc. Although these cannot be considered as entirely satisfactory, the school has been remarkably successful. It has always been claimed that a high altitude is most desirable for an open-air school. This is no doubt true, but experience has shown that encouraging results can be achieved even at low altitudes.



GARDENING AT ASPEN HOUSE.

Aspen House School at Brixton Hill was opened in November, 1925, with accommodation for 130 children. The area is about $\frac{3}{4}$ acre. A disused stable was adapted for administrative purposes, and class shelters, and a rest and dining shelter of improved design, were erected in the grounds.

In April, 1927, Birley House School was transferred to Brent Knoll. The new home was a private house with grounds about an acre in extent. Opposite the school is an extensive recreation ground. It is an advantage for an open-air school to be near a large open space as the children can make good use of the facilities for nature study and games. The house at Brent Knoll is in use for administrative purposes, and shelters have been placed in the grounds.

For many years attempts were made to secure suitable premises for an open-air school in the north of London. Montpelier House

(referred to above) closed after one season's existence, and it was not until 1927 that a permanent school in that part of the county became available. In July of that year Holly Court School at Highgate was opened. This school, which accommodates 260 children, is splendidly situated. The site has an area of $2\frac{1}{4}$ acres with magnificent views across Ken Wood, Parliament Hill Fields and Hampstead Heath. Many of the children come from unattractive surroundings, and the sight of so much open and wooded land on all sides can hardly fail to bring into their lives a happier and more elevating influence.



HOLLY COURT, THE GROUNDS.

In April, 1928, the London County Council was able to open another school in the north of London. This was at Upton House. A part of the premises, which were formerly an industrial school, and an extensive portion of the site have been adapted and combine to form a satisfactory open-air school for 130 children.

Three more schools will be opened shortly. The first will be at Wood Lane, Hammersmith, a district which has previously been without an open-air school. It is hoped that the premises will be ready for occupation in June. Later the second new school will be opened on the Council's housing estate at Downham; and the third at Charlton Park, Greenwich, will replace Shooter's Hill School. These new schools will differ from those now in existence in that the whole of the premises will have to be specially erected, there being no houses

on the sites which could be adapted for administrative purposes. The accommodation of each of these schools will be 130, and the total number of day open-air school places in London will then be 1,460.

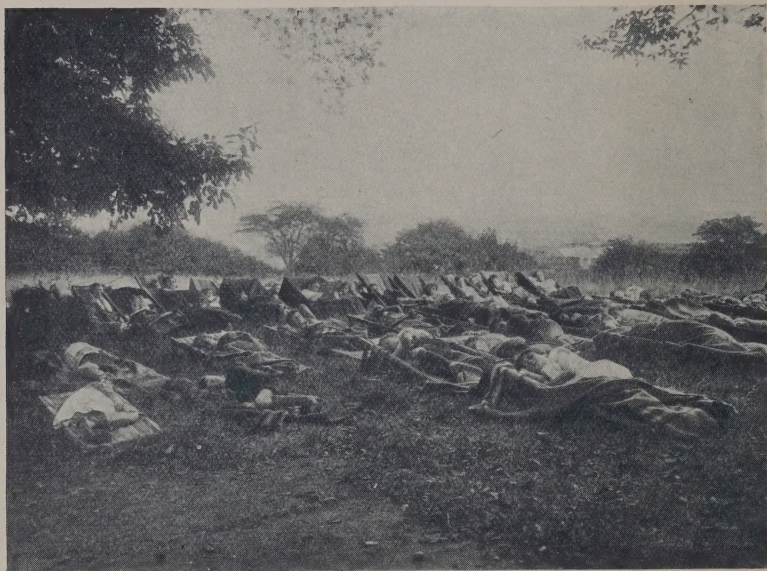
London is by no means the only place in the country where a development has taken place. The paramount importance of fresh air and sunlight as factors in the maintenance of full health is generally recognised, and its recognition has given a great impetus to the establishment of open-air schools throughout the country. The Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education gives the following particulars in his annual report for 1927 :

“ There are now in all 60 day open-air schools providing accommodation for 6,211 children ; others are in process of being established. Plans have been passed since April, 1927, for 10 new day open-air schools providing 1,221 new places ; for 3 new residential schools providing 130 new places and for 2 schools which will provide accommodation for both day (150 places) and resident scholars (200 places). Not a few local education authorities are convinced of the need, but financial considerations render development in this direction difficult at the present time.”

Reference should also be made to the further means of providing open-air education in London by holding open-air classes in connection with ordinary elementary schools. Children of normal physique attend the majority of these classes, but certain of the classes are for delicate children. The classes are held in parks and open-spaces, school gardens and playgrounds, and canvas awnings are usually erected for the protection of the children in inclement weather. In 1928 the number of these classes in London was 167—a record figure—and the number will increase in 1929. Open-air classes are becoming increasingly popular, a fact which indicates that teachers recognise the advantages of open-air education.

FACTS AND FIGURES

It may be well to deal with the organisation of London's schools in greater detail. The schools are certified as schools for the physically defective under Part V. of the Education Act, 1921. They are mixed schools and accommodate boys and girls who are selected by the school medical officer from those children in neighbouring elementary schools who appear to be particularly likely to benefit from an education under open-air conditions. Only in exceptional cases



RESTING.

[Photo, Alexander's Studios]

are children admitted below the age of eight. Before children are admitted to the school, any defects of teeth, adenoids, tonsils, etc., discovered at the time of medical examination should receive attention, in order that regular attendance may not be broken by receiving treatment after admission..

If, after a stay at an open-air school, a pupil is pronounced by the school doctor to be fit to resume attendance at an ordinary school, the child is transferred and its place at the open-air school is filled by another delicate pupil. The average length of stay at an open-air school is about one and a half years.

Although education has its due place, the health of the children is the first consideration. The aim of the open-air school is at once

the *physical* and *mental* welfare of the child. The main features of the open-air school are :

- Fresh air and sunlight.
- Proper diet.
- Rest.
- The hygienic way of life.
- Individual attention.
- Medical treatment.
- Special educational methods.

During the summer months the children attend from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., each week-day, except Saturday, when the schools close at 1 p.m. Regular attendance is of importance if children are to take full advantage of the benefits the schools offer. In the winter months the schools close at dusk instead of at 6 p.m. The same holidays are allowed as in the elementary schools. All the children rest daily from one and a half to two hours (an hour in the winter), special resting hammocks and blankets being provided for their use.

Many children who attend open-air schools live at a distance which makes it impossible for them to walk to and from school. Arrangements are made for them to travel by tram, bus or train, the Council bearing the cost of travelling. Every care is taken to ensure that they travel safely. Wherever possible, the teachers, with the assistance of a policeman or a tram official, see the children into the conveyances.

The school doctor visits the open-air school frequently and a nursing sister is always in attendance. The physical condition of the children is kept under regular observation, and the results are recorded. Only certificated teachers are appointed to the teaching staff. At a school for 130 children there would be a head teacher and four assistants. Other members of the staff of an open-air school are the schoolkeeper, the cook, kitchen assistants and bath attendant.

The children are provided with three meals a day, breakfast dinner and tea (breakfast and dinner on Saturday). Parents are required to contribute towards the cost of the meals in accordance with their means, the maximum charge at the present time being 3s. 4d. weekly. The contributions are fixed by the managing committees or care committees of the schools. The managing committees are responsible for the care of the schools and the general well-being of the children.

The sites and premises of London's open-air schools vary considerably and there are naturally some differences in the arrangements of the buildings. The following accommodation is considered necessary for a school for 130 children :—

ADMINISTRATIVE ROOMS

Kitchen, with larder.
Bathing room.
Drying room.
Blanket store.
Medical room.
Head teacher's room.
Assistant teachers' (male and female) rooms.
Schoolkeeper's room and store.



AN OPEN-AIR CLASS SHELTER.

SHELTERS AND OUTSIDE BUILDINGS

Shelter for resting and meals (area about 2,300 square feet).

Classroom shelters.—These, which are usually 20 feet by 20 feet, accommodate about 32 children each. No artificial heating is provided in these shelters.

Offices.—It is necessary to provide these on a more generous scale than at ordinary elementary schools. The approved number is three for boys and six for girls.

Tar-paving.—It is usual to provide an area of tar-paving for purposes of physical exercises and recreation during wet weather. The area is from 2,000 to 2,500 square feet.

On the financial side it is scarcely possible to give a definite figure in the way of initial expenditure. The cost of sites is naturally

a varying factor, depending on the area of the site, its situation, and whether buildings are included with it.

The expenditure on buildings also fluctuates. If there is a residence or other permanent structure which can be adapted for school purposes, the work is naturally of a different character. But in general terms it might be said that the cost of a school for 130 children would be somewhere in the neighbourhood of £5,000. The initial cost of equipment (furniture, books and apparatus) for a school of this size is about £1,180.

The annual cost of maintaining a day open-air school for 130 children is estimated at about £4,600, and this sum is made up as follows :

	£
Teachers salaries (1 head, 4 assistants)	1,700
Medical services (services of school doctor and full-time nursing sister)	250
Caretaking, cleaning and domestic staff (school-keeper, cook, two kitchen assistants, bath attendant and cleaners)	820
Meals—	
(a) for children	950
(b) for staff	160
Children's travelling expenses	400
Water, light, fuel	90
Rates, taxes, etc.	100
Miscellaneous (including renewals of furniture and equipment)	130
	£4,600

About £480 should be received annually for payments in respect of meals for children and certain members of the school staff. The net annual cost of maintenance of a school for 130 is thus about £4,120, which gives a cost per head of £32. This is more than double the cost per head of maintaining a child at an elementary school.

On the other hand it must be borne in mind that, if an incipient disease can be cured by a stay of some months at an open-air school, the result may be the saving of a good deal of expenditure in the way of sanatorium or hospital treatment in later years. The open-air schools have undoubtedly effected economy in saving many boys and girls from becoming permanently unfit.

PARENTS AND CHILDREN

No account of the open-air schools would be complete without a reference to the views of the parents and children. At the outset it was only natural that there should be among some parents distrust of experimental schools which were so different from those to which they were accustomed. The open-air school with its somewhat Spartan regime was in the nature of a revolution. And yet the first few months of the experiment won many whole-hearted supporters among the parents (see remarks in paragraph II).

Since those early days parents have come more and more to realise the value of the open-air schools in bringing health to their children, and opposition on their part has largely disappeared. When it was decided at Stowey House School two years ago to extend the sunlight treatment to all the children, it was rather surprising to find that there were practically no difficulties to overcome on the side of the parents. The head teachers of the open-air schools are constantly receiving letters from the parents of children at the schools which bear testimony to the improvement in their health due to the open-air conditions and the educational methods. The following are a few extracts from recent letters. These are typical of numbers which have been received :

“Reverting to my visit to your school some weeks ago, may I congratulate you on all I saw ; the system seems beyond praise, and the personal attention given to the children seems all that can be desired . . .”

“We must thank you for the great pleasure we had last Thursday in seeing our child at work, play, and rest, and we greatly appreciate the kindness and interest shown by you and teachers. We think your methods splendid in the way you are helping the children. They appear so happy and full of spirit and you deserve great credit for what you have done and are doing. My child has had very little schooling ; in fact no child has had less, and the fact that you are not cramming his brain and yet teaching him is greatly improving his health.”

“I wish to take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation of the splendid work the L.C.C. Education Department are doing in the all-round improvement of the children attending their schools, and particularly of that being done at the open-air school. My son Reg. has attended there since its opening and the improvement in his health during that time is really remarkable. For nearly a year now he has been attending regularly whereas at the ordinary schools which he attended previously his average attendance was about one month in six, and I feel sure that a good deal of this improvement has been due to the care and enthusiasm of the headmaster and of the staff of the school, to whom I would like to tender my thanks.

I believe that there was some doubt about Reg.'s complaint, bronchial asthma, being amenable to the open-air treatment, and the undoubted success in this case may prove of interest."

"I trust you will not consider this a liberty in writing you, but my husband and I would like you to know how very grateful we are to you and all concerned for what is being done for our boy at your school. No one but ourselves knows what a blessing it is to see such a wonderful improvement in him after having him so long under hospital. I must say we were rather anxious or nervous about him attending an open-air school, but now we see what a wise step we took, as it has restored him to good health, and he is very happy at his school and speaks very highly of his head master and teachers, also, boy-like, of the good food and the sports, and I am grateful for the trouble you take to encourage children to be clean and smart in appearance. So kindly accept our grateful thanks for all that is being done for him."

Generally speaking, parents are not slow to grasp the "open-air idea." Some, however, need educating on the subject of suitable clothing for their children. Not unnaturally there is, at first, a tendency to send the children to school over-clothed. There is anxiety as to the effect the open-air conditions—especially in the colder weather—may produce. Warm clothing is, of course, a necessity in the winter, but too many garments may be harmful.

The following incident shows how fears may lead to extreme precautions. Quite recently at one of the schools a boy came to the nurse for a supply of hot water. As the request was an unusual one, the nurse asked the reason. It was then discovered that the little fellow was wearing a rubber water bottle strapped round his chest like a breast plate. The water was cold and he wanted a refill! The head teachers are always ready to advise parents about suitable clothing for their children, and the parents are usually glad to have advice and to follow it.

There is no doubt that the children, when once they are accustomed to the new conditions, are happy and find the life full of interest. The methods of instruction tend to produce this result. Physical exercises, organised games, gardening, practical woodwork and nature study occupy a prominent position, and in all branches of instruction advantage is taken of the opportunities afforded by local conditions for illustrating the lessons at first hand.

The immediate topic of instruction may be interrupted from time to time by allusions to objects or phenomena that happen to present themselves suddenly to view; for example, to the song of birds, the effect of sunlight on trees, a flight of birds, a hailstorm, a rainbow. Digressions of this kind are a necessary feature of instruction in the open-air, and are only one instance of the occasions that arise to prevent a rigid adherence to the time-table. Apart from such deviations from the ordered programme frequent occasions

present themselves on which children can be trained to use their initiative and powers of observation, and to record their impressions intelligently.

“Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your teacher”

The ideal of open air teaching could not be better expressed than in Wordsworth's words.

The usual school subjects are always dealt with in as practical a manner as possible. Manual methods are adopted in all lessons, not only for the sake of education through hand and eye, but also that the exercise may conduce to bodily health. Education of this



DANCING.

kind develops the constructive talent; it gives the children a taste for making things and especially for making things in the open-air. They learn to appreciate the outdoor life, for has it not meant to them health and vigour in place of weakness and lassitude?

For the child's idea of the open-air school let us turn to a description by a girl at one of the schools:

“My first impression when I saw the school was a very bewildered one. I had never been to a school half so big as this one and besides—I turned to my mother with a cry of surprise—‘Why mother, there are four bandstands!’ That's exactly what I thought the classrooms were. But scarcely had I recovered from one surprise when another greeted me. Round

the sides of the dining shed were stacked piles of stretchers, and then I was told that we went to sleep in the afternoon! Really that was a day of surprises, but somehow I recovered from them all, and as the days sped on and cold dreary winter merged into dainty spring, then summer, I thanked my lucky stars that I had come to the school.

On the whole I think I can honestly say that the school has improved me, both in health and lessons. The subject I think I have improved most in is nature study. I have become accustomed to listen for the sounds of different birds, and to notice tiny buds as they come out in Spring. This is an ideal place for all who are keen on nature study. Before I came I was terrified of bees, wasps, worms and all kinds of creepy crawly insects, but now owing to the fact that we've got a bee-hive at school, I know that bees will not sting unless they are annoyed. Worms—well I don't actually love worms, and I wouldn't pick one up unless I was compelled—but I don't scream at the sight of one now, because I know they can do no harm. Moreover they are a help to the garden. The best season is summer, for then, being in a large school, we have the opportunity of studying Nature's works, of seeing the apple trees come into pretty flower, and best of all we have our meals outside in the sun and the bees and wasps hum around us merrily, and we're just like one big family with big brothers and sisters to look after the little ones. In summer, too, there is much more to do than in winter, for there is a garden of our own to tend. There is a delight in sowing seeds and watching them grow, and it is good practice for when we are older and have a bigger garden of our very own. On Saturday we have handwork lesson which I love. I am sure there is not a more delightful hobby than copper work. I am very keen on dramatics. I think there is nothing I love better than to take our chairs on to the lawn and act scenes from Shakespeare. Lastly, but by no means least, I think I've improved in health, and my attitude towards open-air. Before I would never go out on a cold day but would stay indoors and sit by the fire. The best thing I thought for a weak and anæmic person was to stay in the warm room with hardly any air. Now I cannot stay in a room where there is stale air. The sun and fresh air are the best friends an anæmic person can have. You will get well and healthy more quickly in the open air than anywhere else, even in cold air, for if you run and jump about you need never be cold. I think I can say that everyone who has been here would readily prefer the life of an open-air school to that of an ordinary school."

For children who have lived all their lives in crowded and possibly sordid districts it is a new and pleasant experience to spend their school hours among trees and flowers. A boy in the east-end of London, interested in these features, says, "the grounds are larger than ordinary schools and we have many plots of flowers and lawns

which give a brilliant show of flowers in summer. Also we have large shady trees which can never be found in other schools. The air is fresher and cleaner here." Gardening is a very popular feature, and the allocation of plots to the children still further stimulates their interest.

At some of the schools the keeping of bees has its educational value. As a child remarks "One of the advantages of being in the open-air is that one can learn to love the little creatures and insects, and not hurt them." A little east-ender, remarking on the time for rest in the open air says "We may not have enough rest at night." She is mentioning a fact which is unfortunately far too common.



A LESSON ON THE BEE.

Often the family circumstances in the poorer neighbourhoods of London make it well nigh impossible for the little ones to get sufficient sleep at night. For such the enforced rest at the open-air schools must be invaluable.

With some of the children the meals at first present a problem. Before admission they may not have been accustomed to simple, wholesome fare. A headmaster writes "A large proportion of the children attending open-air schools have not been properly fed—sometimes on account of poverty, but far more frequently through ignorance, or because parents do not exercise their authority with regard to food. . . . Such children are best away from their homes at meal times, for, sitting down with those of good appetite, those

who eat and enjoy plain nourishing food, they commence new ways ; they hate to be different from the rest, and they begin to eat what at other times they would have spurned. The fresh air sharpens their appetites, and in a few weeks they will eat with evident pleasure a meal that would satisfy a full-grown man. . . . With the assimilation of plain food of good quality the physical condition immediately begins to improve."

Extracts are given below from a letter quite recently received from an old boy who left an open-air school a little more than a year ago. The letter is of particular interest because the writer is the boy referred to in the third parent's letter quoted, which was written



DINNER TIME AT HOLLY COURT.

just before the family left for Malta. Taken together the letters illustrate the good work done in open-air schools both from the physical and mental standpoints :

"I have had a glorious year out here. At the beginning of the season I learnt to swim. Although at home the doctors always warned me to keep out of the water, the general opinion out here was quite the opposite. Of course the temperature of the water is different from that at home and when one comes out of the water the heat of the rocks hurts the feet. At the end of the season I was able to swim a good mile on the 'trudge.' I am looking forward to next summer. What made me write this letter was the fact that I came out top in the Dockyard Appren-

tices' Examination (523 marks out a total of 550). I have chosen the electrical trade as one which will best suit me and which offers a promising future.... I'm sure that the sun and the swimming have stretched me out. I celebrated my fifteenth birthday last Christmas. My height is 5 ft. 2 ins. and my weight is 7 stone in my clothes. I ought to tell you that I negotiated this winter very successfully, having mere suggestions of colds, the same as the others. I didn't miss a day at school last term through illness."

Another old boy now in Australia writes : " It was by an accident that I should be sitting by a fire somewhere in Australia when by chance I picked up a paper and read an article which referred to my old school and the good work it has done since its foundation and



THE CARE COMMITTEE HELP THE CHILDREN TO BUY BOOTS.

also its figures of healthy workers who were once weak and delicate children. I for one owe my health and strength to that school. I quite remember how thin and ill I was after my operations. In fact I was nicknamed ' Skinny ' ! I have never had a day's illness since I left that school ten years ago. I am now 23 years old and my health has never been better. I am I suppose in the prime of life, but it is hard to say if I would have been the same had there been no open-air school. I am now managing a Fuel Depot, which is heavy work, but I am quite capable of doing it. When I return to England—which I hope to do in two years—I hope to visit the old school again."

SCHOOLS FOR TUBERCULOUS CHILDREN

In addition to the open-air schools for debilitated and anæmic children, a number of open-air schools for tuberculous children have been provided in different parts of the county and are organised on very similar lines to those already described.

These schools are conducted in close co-operation with the local tuberculosis dispensaries. The children admitted are those who have been notified as suffering from the disease; many of them have passed through a period of sanatorium treatment, and are sufficiently restored to health to return to their homes and resume most of their normal activities. They comprise chiefly children with tuberculosis of the lungs or glands which is in a quiescent stage, though children with other forms are admitted.



CLASS SHELTER AT A SCHOOL FOR TUBERCULOUS CHILDREN.

There are in London six of these schools accommodating 515 boys and girls. A nurse who is in daily attendance at each school, supervises meals, weighs and measures the children and regularly takes their temperatures. Specified periods of the day are set apart during which all the children rest. As far as possible lessons, meals and rest are taken out of doors, but there is as a rule indoor accommodation for use in bad weather. The schools have regular medical visits by the tuberculosis officer for the district, who also acts as school doctor. From these schools children can be transferred to residential institutions under the Council's Tuberculosis Scheme if the disease becomes active. Children may remain at the schools until the age of sixteen. They are specially examined at the age of fourteen, and many are then found fit to leave school and take up suitable occupations. The records of the after-careers of children are evidence of the value of the schools, and the permanent benefits which result from the education of the children under open-air conditions.

COUNTRY AND SEASIDE

London has also three residential schools for children who need the tonic of fresh air in healthy surroundings. The first of these schools was the King's Canadian School at Bushy Park, Hampton Hill, which was opened in August, 1919, and accommodates 300 boys. The scheme for its establishment was originally put forward to the Board of Education under section 17 (a) of the Education Act, 1918 (now the Education Act, 1921, Part V.). This section enabled local education authorities, with the approval of the Board of Education, to maintain holiday or school camps. Eventually



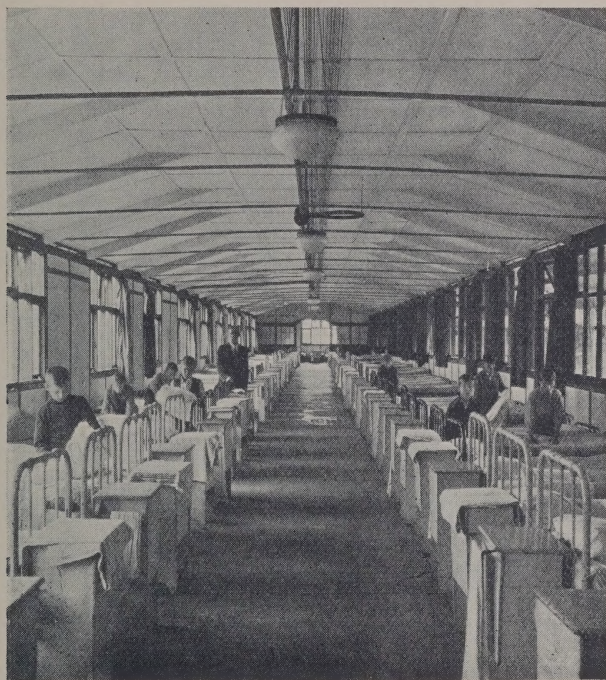
SEARCHING FOR SPECIMENS.

[Photopress.]

however, the Board decided to certify the institution as a special school for the physically defective under the Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act, 1899-1914. The two other schools (at Margate and St. Leonards-on-Sea) have been similarly certified.

It is a statutory requirement for such schools that children selected for admission must be certified as physically defective by the School Medical Officer. Particulars are kept in the School Medical Officer's Department of children who have been noticed by the medical staff or the care committee as requiring a change of the kind provided at these schools, and the various districts of London are taken in turn for the purpose of selecting batches for admission.

How "Bushy" came into existence is an interesting story. During the war, His Majesty the King lent Upper Lodge and surrounding grounds which adjoin Bushy Park, near Hampton Court, to the Canadian Red Cross Society. The Canadians erected temporary hospital buildings in the grounds and at the expiration of the war offered these buildings and their equipment to the King. His Majesty thought that no better use could be made of the whole premises than to use them to promote the health of London's delicate boys. He graciously offered them for 10 years to the London County



THE KING'S CANADIAN SCHOOL—A DORMITORY.

Council, who gladly accepted the offer in the interests of London school boys.

"Bushy" is like a small settlement. The main building, Upper Lodge, contains staff quarters, kitchen, dining hall and rest room for the boys. On one side are the boys' dormitories with their neat rows of beds (one for each boy), sick ward, medical and dental room, baths, and a large kitchen garden which supplies fresh fruit and vegetables to boys and staff. On the other side are the lecture hall or theatre, lawns, flower gardens, and—beyond—an isolation hut available if any boy is unfortunate enough to contract infectious

illness. Then there are the woods, pools and streams—all within the school grounds. Adjoining is the wide, open space of Bushy Park. All the year round, except for a fortnight at Christmas, nearly 300 London school boys are living in these ideal surroundings. 70 boys are admitted at short intervals and stay for four weeks in the summer or six weeks in the winter.

For the sake of everybody concerned a medical inspection is held the day before admission to ensure that every boy is thoroughly clean and is not suffering from any infectious disease. No boy may join the party if he is not perfectly clean. For admission, boys must be 10 years of age and upwards.

Everything is done to make the boys' stay happy as well as health giving. Lessons are not neglected, but they are made specially interesting and enjoyable, and are mostly taken in the open unless the weather is too bad. When the boys are not doing school work, the staff spare no pains in seeing that their time is profitably and enjoyably spent. Sports and competitions are arranged every week, and concerts and other entertainments are provided indoors.

Regular rest is as important as regular food and exercise, and ample time is given to rest both during the day and at night. During the whole of the twenty-four hours some one on the staff is on duty looking after the boys. A local doctor sees all the boys soon after their arrival and visits the school regularly during their stay in case he is wanted. Two fully qualified nurses live at the school. A dentist visits the school and attends to the children's teeth if necessary. Sound teeth are a first essential for good health. Some boys are given special exercises to remedy minor physical defects.

On Sunday the boys are taken to a place of worship in accordance with their parents' denominations.

"The function of the school," to quote the School Medical Officer, "is to preserve town children who begin to flag from sinking into a state of chronic anaemia or debility. It is expressly brought into being to deal with the child whose doctor says 'Now, mother, the thing to do is to get him into the country for a month.'" Of the value of the school, the School Medical Officer a few years ago reported:—"The school has achieved a notable success. Not only do the boys improve in health, they have their teeth thoroughly seen to during their stay, are taught the rudiments of hygiene both by precept and practice; and receive as well a moral uplift from the excellent tone maintained. Boys gain in weight in some cases as much as seven or nine pounds during their stay. Defects of posture and carriage and incipient deformities are skilfully and methodically dealt with by intensive remedial exercises. Not only does each boy learn and practise a hygienic mode of living, but at the end of his stay, each boy carries away with him a definite set of instructions suited to his needs."

The two schools at the seaside are Wanstead House at Margate, and Barham House at St. Leonards-on-Sea. Wanstead House,

which accommodates 64 girls at a time, was opened in August, 1920. The school is at Cliftonville on the sea front, a splendid situation for its purpose—and many hundreds of girls have benefited from the bracing air for which Margate is noted. The length of stay is six weeks. The procedure for the admission and departure of the children is similar to that at Bushy, except that each party admitted is about half the total in residence, and the change takes place every three weeks. The school is staffed by a head mistress, two assistant mistresses and a nurse-bookkeeper. A local doctor visits the school two or three times a week. No girl below 9 years is admitted.



MARGATE—PRACTICAL GEOLOGY.

[Photopress.

Barham House was given to the Council by Mr. G. Rainey for the benefit of children from Shoreditch schools. The school was opened in May, 1921. It accommodates 64 children at a time and all these spend a month at the school. The age limit for admission is 9, except in the case of children from Hamond Square School, any of whom are eligible. While at Barham House the children's health is the first consideration, but they receive several hours' schooling a day, as much as possible taking place in the open air, either on the beach or in the grounds. The regular resting period is a feature of all the residential as well as the day open-air schools. An experiment in sunlight treatment is being made at Barham House.

Each of the residential open-air schools is under the supervision of a managing committee, consisting partly of members of the

Education Committee and partly of persons living near the school who are specially interested in its activities.

Substantial and suitable meals are provided according to a dietary approved by the School Medical Officer. The statutory provisions for religious instruction and observances are complied with. The children's fares to and from the schools are paid by the Council. Parents are expected to provide their children with suitable kit, and to contribute weekly (according to their means) a certain sum towards the food provided at the school. The amount



KING'S CANADIAN SCHOOL—"PADDLING."

in each case is decided by the care committee of the day school, and before their children leave London parents are required to sign an agreement to pay regularly, and to allow the children to have any medical treatment that may be advised by the doctor while they are at the school. Where parents are unable to make a contribution the children are admitted free, and the school care committee do their best to find clothes for them.

The Council has also an agreement with the Shaftesbury Society under which 30 girls are admitted for a month at a time at the Russell Côtes School of Recovery, Parkstone.

INFLUENCE OF THE MOVEMENT

What influence has the open-air school movement had on the system of education generally? It is perhaps of interest to observe how a movement, educational or otherwise, may be affected by the habits and traditions of a nation. Only by slow degrees do our ideas on environment change; it is always difficult to escape from the life of the past. The schools of the nineteenth century were almost invariably massive buildings bearing traces in their architecture of the factories and workshops which came with the industrial revolution.

Compulsory education has too often meant compulsory confinement. In the days when many of our existing schools were built, few people understood the relation between health and movement, health and sunshine, health and fresh-air. Even now, it has been pointed out, practice, in the matter of health, lags far behind expert knowledge. The fact is that a school, once built, usually conditions many years of educational practice. But signs are not wanting that a change is taking place.

A few years ago Sir George Newman referred to open-air schools in the following terms:—"These schools demonstrated in an almost dramatic manner what could be done for the delicate child by placing him, even though only for a portion of the twenty-four hours, under the conditions obtaining in an open-air school, and the question inevitably arose, if good for restoring the delicate child to normal health, why not good to secure similar conditions for all children, and so maintain them in sound health?" On the question of educational methods, he says elsewhere, "Open-air school education requires a special technique of its own. This view was well enforced at the recent conference on open-air schools and education held in connection with the International Child Welfare Congress at Paris. The papers there emphasised the fact that the open-air movement is destined to have an effect not merely in its own specialised sphere, but on methods of education generally."

The natural environment of a growing child is the open-air. All over the country education authorities are realising the wisdom of designing schools on open-air lines. The London County Council has already erected elementary schools on these principles and others have been planned. The main features are open corridors and French windows to enable the classrooms in suitable weather to be open to the air. The classrooms will be placed with a southern aspect to ensure the maximum of sunlight.

It cannot, of course, be claimed that all the modern ideas are due to the lessons taught by the open-air schools. The advantages of an open-air life and the value of sunlight have been impressed upon us from many directions, yet it can hardly be doubted that the results obtained in the open-air schools have already exercised considerable influence and may have a still greater influence in the future.

LIST OF THE SCHOOLS

<i>School.</i>	<i>Address.</i>	<i>Date of opening.</i>	<i>Accommodation.</i>	<i>Area of site.</i>
DAY OPEN-AIR SCHOOLS.				
ASPEN HOUSE	.. Christchurch Road, Brixton Hill, S.W.2. (Telephone : Streatham 2192.)	23.11.25	130	About $\frac{3}{4}$ acre.
BRENT KNOLL	.. Mayow Road, Sydenham, S.E.23 (replacing Birley House open-air school, Forest Hill; open since 10.6.08). (Telephone : Sydenham 1527.)	26.4.27	130	About 1 acre
BOW ROAD	.. 47A, Bow Road, Bow, E.3. (Telephone : East 4933.)	30.1.22	160	About $\frac{3}{4}$ acre.
HOLLY COURT	.. Merton Lane, Highgate, N.6. (Telephone : Mount View 2835.)	18.7.27	260	About $2\frac{1}{4}$ acres.
SHOOTER'S HILL	.. Plum Lane, Woolwich, S.E.18. (Telephone : Woolwich 0596.)	10.6.08	130	About $6\frac{1}{2}$ acres.
STOWEY HOUSE	.. 46, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4. (Telephone : Brixton 1278.)	14.6.20	260	About 2 acres.
UPTON HOUSE	.. Urswick Road, Homerton, E.9. (Telephone : Clissold 9602.)	23.4.28	130	About $\frac{3}{4}$ acre.
WOOD LANE	.. Wood Lane, Shepherd's Bush, W.12. (Telephone : Park 5335.)	17.6.29	130	About $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres.
<i>Not Yet Open.</i>				
THE DOWNHAM	.. Shroffold Road, Downham Estate, Bromley, Kent.	—	130	Nearly 2 acres.
CHARLTON PARK (to replace Shooter's Hill open - air school)	.. Charlton Park Road, Charlton, S.E.7.	—	130	About 3 acres.
RESIDENTIAL OPEN-AIR SCHOOLS.				
THE KING'S CANADIAN SCHOOL FOR LONDON CHILDREN (Boys)	Upper Lodge, Bushy Park, Hampton Hill, Middlesex (Telephone : Molesey 55.)	7.8.19	300	—
WANSTEAD HOUSE SCHOOL (Girls)	Eastern Esplanade, Cliftonville, Margate. (Telephone : Margate 599.)	10.8.20	64	—
BARHAM HOUSE SCHOOL (Boys or Girls)	London Road, St. Leonards-on-Sea. (Telephone : Hastings 263.)	26.5.21	64	—
THE RUSSELL CÔTES SCHOOL OF RECOVERY (Girls)	Parkstone, Bournemouth	(The Council has an agreement with the Shaftesbury Society for 30 places to be reserved.)		

SCHOOLS FOR TUBERCULOUS CHILDREN

<i>School.</i>	<i>Address.</i>	<i>Date of opening.</i>	<i>Accommodation.</i>
KENSAL HOUSE ..	553 Harrow Road North Kensington, W.10.	20.3.11	90
SPRINGWELL HOUSE	80, North Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4. (Telephone : Battersea 1387.)	1.4.19	125
STORMONT HOUSE ..	75, Downs Park Road, Clapton, E.5 (Telephone : Clissold 1633.)	8.9.19	75
THE ELIZABETHAN	Broomhouse Road, Fulham, S.W.6.	18.5.21	50
GEERE HOUSE ..	35 and 37, Stepney Green, E.1. ..	26.4.27	50
NIGHTINGALE HOUSE	Fort Road, Upper Grange Road, Bermondsey, S.E.1. (Telephone : Bermondsey 2532.)	10.1.28	125

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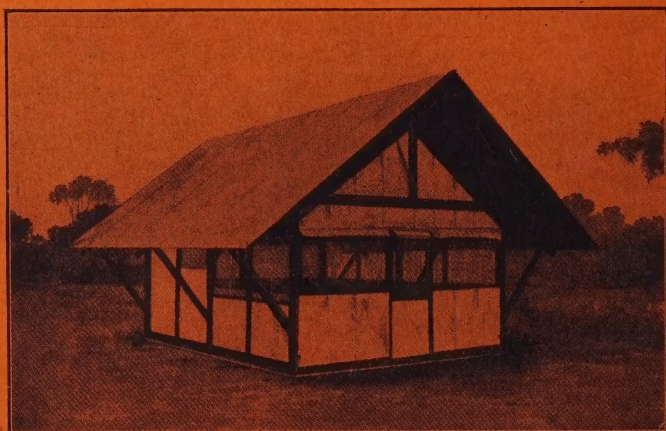
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